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Franklin County Recorder

The Hospice Choice

When choices seem few and unpleasant...

Life is full of choices. We all want to be in control, capable of making our own decisions, determining how we live our lives. When confronting a life-threatening illness and cure no longer is possible we experience fear, frustration and confusion. We can feel as if we have lost control of our lives. Hospice restores our ability to make decisions, to put life back on track by offering positive choices as we confront life's end

What assurances do I have if I choose hospice?

You can be assured that your wishes will be respected and that you will be allowed to die, pain free, surrounded by those who love you, and with the utmost respect and dignity. Hospice will focus on comfort measures and quality of life needs and allow you to die naturally rather than prolong your life beyond its natural ability to continue

When does hospice become a part of my choice?

People who choose hospice have medical conditions that no longer can be cured. Hospice, with more than 25 years of experience in caring for the terminally ill, offers tremendous advances in pain management that dramatically improve quality of life. One of the most life-affirming forms of health care, hospice provides comfort, support and respect for the patient, the family and friends. Traditional medical care focuses almost solely on patients' physical needs. Hospice addresses the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of patients facing the end of life along with the needs of their caregivers.

By making the hospice choice, what can I expect?

Hospice caregivers and volunteers join together, around the clock if necessary, to provide hospice care for patients, family and friends. Physicians, nurses, home health aides, social workers, bereavement counselors, chaplains and volunteers collaborate to assure the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual needs that are especially important at the end of life, are met. Hospice caregivers realize how deeply family members and friends are affected by a terminal illness

How does hospice impact the quality of my life?

A significant reassurance is that hospice services are provided in the soothing, familiar surroundings of your home where you are most comfortable and where loved ones can be involved more easily. And, if you live in a nursing home or assisted living facility, hospice care is provided in those locations as well.

If I choose hospice care, how will I pay for the services?

Medicare, Medicaid and most private insurance companies recognize hospice care, which generally is a cost savings in health care. Care is provided in the home instead of a hospital, with the family helping as caregivers, and there is no expensive high-tech equipment to escalate your health care costs. Hospice care need not be a financial burden to anyone. Local hospices will work closely with you to identify possible sources of payment. Hospice, the ultimate expression of caring, support and love, has served millions of people of all income levels, races, creeds, ages and medical circumstances. Hospice is here to help you when needed.

Can a hospice patient who shows signs of recovery be returned to regular medical treatment?

Certainly. If improvement in the condition occurs and the disease seems to be in remission, the patient can be discharged from hospice and return to aggressive therapy or go on about his or her daily life. If a discharged patient should later need to return to hospice care, Medicare and most private insurance would allow additional coverage for this purpose.

What does the hospice admission process involve?

One of the first things hospice will do is to contact the patient's physician to make sure he or she agrees that hospice care is appropriate for this patient at this time. (Hospices may have medical staff available to help patients who have no physician.) The patient also will be asked to sign consent and insurance forms. These are similar to the forms patients sign when they

enter a hospital.

Isn't hospice care just for people who have cancer?

No Hospice care is available for patients with many terminal illnesses such as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), dementia, heart disease, HIV/AIDS, liver disease, pulmonary disease, stroke, coma and other conditions. Inquire at your local hospice to learn more.

What specific assistance does hospice provide home-based patients?

Hospice patients are cared for by a team of physicians, nurses, social workers, counselors, home health aides, clergy, therapists, and volunteers who all provide assistance based on their areas of expertise. In addition, hospices help provide medications, supplies, equipment, hospital services and additional helpers in the home, as appropriate.

How do I make the hospice choice?

By speaking to your physician, clergy, hospital discharge planner, social worker, nurse or local/state hospice organization. When you and your family realize that care instead of cure is most important to you, that is when to ask for hospice.

If I make the hospice choice and need more information about Ohio's hospices, who can help me?

The Ohio Hospice & Palliative Care Organization, whose mission is to promote the development and delivery of highest quality, end-of-life care through advocacy of hospice philosophy and standards, can help you with this.